

EXETER-WEST GREENWICH April 28, 2009

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

MINUTES

The Exeter-West Greenwich Regional School District School Committee held a meeting on this date at 7:00 p.m. in the Exeter-West Greenwich Jr. – Sr. High School Library. Members present were Susan DeSack, Chairperson; Gregory Coutcher, Clerk; Valerie Zuercher; Mark Rafanelli, Robert Bollengier, and Mary Walsh. Teri Cicero, Vice Chairperson; arrived at 7:18 p.m. Superintendent Thomas J. Geismar; Director of Administration Robert V. Ross; Director of Curriculum Nancy I. Daley, and Director of Special Services Carmella Farrar were present. Student Member Katherine Matook was absent.

ORDER – Chair DeSack called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all and Chair DeSack read the District Mission Statement.

Open Forum (15-minute limit) – None

Presentation – Student Member Report – None

Jr. High School Presentation – Principal Mark Thompson and Assistant Principal JoAnn Basel welcomed everyone and presented a

brief music video which portrayed student life at EWG Jr. High School. Principal Thompson explained that earlier this evening he discovered that the PowerPoint that was enclosed in members' packets and that will be shown tonight contains some inaccuracies pertaining to NECAP test scores. He disseminated a printout of correct Fall 2008 NECAP scores and said that he will note and correct the errors as they come up in his overview of tonight's PowerPoint Presentation. Principal Thompson reported that the Jr. High NECAP scores are extremely good overall.

Vice Chair Cicero arrived at this time, (7:18 p.m.).

Principal Thompson gave an analysis of the NECAP test results. Some other items reviewed in his presentation included details and challenges concerning the writing assessments, comments/reports regarding Annual Yearly Progress, (AYP) and the new computer literacy program, and the work in progress to identify needs. Assistant Principal Basel outlined plans for improvement, new and ongoing strategies that have been implemented, and suspension data. In closing, Principal Thompson announced two occurrences that he learned about yesterday. First, thanks to the efforts of Nancy Daley and Jr. High science teacher Beth Brocato, the Jr. High will receive the RITTI grant for next year. The grant award amounts to \$40,000 in equipment and tens of thousands of dollars for training. Next, Beth Brocato, along with nine other teachers from all over the US, has been accepted as a Master Teacher in the ARMADA Project

through the URI Office of Marine Programs. This is a very prestigious award. These teachers will participate this summer in a hands-on science content research experience somewhere in

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the world. Principal Thompson expressed how proud he is of Ms. Brocato. In closing, Principal Thompson commented that if the Jr. High looks different next year due to budget cuts, the Junior High will lose phenomenal teachers/administrator. He expressed that he understands the reality of the budget situation but any consideration would be appreciated.

ROUTINE ITEMS – CONSENT AGENDA- Superintendent Geismar gave an overview of the Consent Agenda.

Vice Chair Cicero moved to accept the consent agenda. Seconded by Member Bollengier. Voted 7 – 0 in favor.

The following items were approved:

A. Approval of Minutes - Regular Minutes of April 14, 2009; Joint Meeting Minutes of February 12, 2009; Special Meeting/Budget Workshop Minutes of February 17, 2009; Joint Meeting Minutes of February 23, 2009; Budget Workshop Minutes of March 3, 2009; Budget Workshop Minutes of March 5, 2009; Special Meeting Minutes of March 31, 2009

B. Personnel Items

1. Appointments

2. Leaves of Absence

3. Resignations – (As Recommended by the Superintendent, with Regret)

- a. Letter of Resignation from Nancy Daley, for the purpose of Retirement, from her position as Curriculum Director, effective June 26, 2009**
- b. Letter of Resignation from Kathleen Wheeler, for the purpose of Retirement, from her position as Teacher Assistant at Lineham Preschool, effective June 26, 2009**
- c. Resignation of JoAnn Basel from her position as Jr. High School Assistant Principal, effective June 30, 2009**

4. Grievances

5. Non-Renewals

6. Recalls

7. Sabbaticals

C. Bills – In the amount of \$303,179.85

D. Home School Approvals

End Consent Agenda

Members did not express any questions/comments/concerns regarding Correspondence.

Correspondence – (1) Confidential Correspondence #1; (2) Document(s) regarding ProChange Dating Violence Program/Study;

**(3) Sr. High School Important End of the Year Dates; (4) April 23, 2009
Memorandum for RI Department of Education
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**regarding Statewide Student Transportation System Update; (5) April
28, 2009 Memorandum from Superintendent Geismar to School
Committee Regarding the DECA Trip**

**Budget Discussion/Charter Discussion/Workshop – Chair DeSack
remarked that the good news is the School Committee passed its
budget. The bad news is it has to live with it.**

**Member Rafanelli referenced Correspondence (3) and pointed out that
he received an
e-mail regarding a date change to Honors Night. Superintendent
Geismar confirmed that Honors Night has been rescheduled to June
3rd.**

**Superintendent Geismar reverted back to agenda item, Budget
Discussion/Charter Discussion/Workshop and reported that he has
received three letters of intent from community members who are
interested in serving on the Charter Change Committee. Member
Bollengier requested to comment regarding the Charter Commission.
He referenced an e-mail from Dr. Geismar informing members that
Bob Hicks of Exeter put forth his name for consideration on the**

Charter Change Committee. Member Bollengier suggested that the School Committee may need to decide whether or not Dr. Hicks, with his wife serving on the Exeter Town Council, is conflicted from putting his name in for consideration to the lottery. His wife is on a voting body that will make a decision as to how funds will be appropriated in the future from the Town of Exeter which pays roughly one-half to the school district budget. There may perhaps be a conflict of interest. Chair DeSack said that she will check with legal counsel. However, the Charter Change Committee is not a voting board. It will bring forth a proposal to the School Committee. Member Bollengier said that he understands that, however, that committee will bring forth a proposal to the School Committee that will affect future budgets of which Arlene Hicks casts a vote. Member Bollengier said that he is just asking to look at that so the School Committee does not find that Dr. Hicks is conflicted.

Chair DeSack said that there is a meeting scheduled with the teachers' union this Thursday at 6:00 p.m. There is nothing new to report at this time. Clerk Coutcher asked if there has been thought regarding giving the teachers' union a cutoff date. Chair DeSack said there will have to be one. Superintendent Geismar said that Administrators have to schedule students and determine what staff will look like. There is a sense of urgency that everyone needs to feel.

Administration would like to know by May 15th . Chair DeSack said that the School Committee will make its decisions on programs at its meeting in May.

NEW BUSINESS – Hockey Proposal – Superintendent Geismar introduced Christine Clooney and Tony Ventura who are here to put forward a proposed hockey team model at EWG. Ms. Clooney and Mr. Ventura gave an overview of their proposal to start a hockey team to be fully funded by fundraising done through a 501 C 3 Corporation and

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with a legal agreement to hold the district harmless of any expenses incurred by the team. They are seeking School Committee consensus if there is an interest in entertaining a self-funded hockey program at EWG and School Committee approval to put out a survey to high school students to find out who would be interested in playing “if” there was a hockey program. A lengthy discussion ensued and members asked clarifying questions regarding insurance, liability, a legal agreement, ice time, practice schedule, transportation, equipment costs, the 501 C 3, and fundraising. Chair DeSack asked for consensus from the Committee if Ms. Cooney and Mr. Ventura may progress with the idea that the School Committee will support the program as long as all of the committees’ questions are answered. A show of hands resulted in agreeing to allow them to move forward with the idea. Chair DeSack said that the committee will support the idea as long as all insurance and liability questions are answered. Member Bollengier explained why he did not show his

hand of support. He said that he is ecstatic about the hockey program, however, concerned as a committee member because of the financial situation that the district is facing now and that one of the discussion items the Committee has to discuss is that the district will have no sports. The Committee has a strong obligation to other sport teams. Chair DeSack expressed her opinion that the Committees' vote to support a hockey team that is self-funded does not minimize the Committees' support to other sport teams. Member Bollengier said that he thinks it does send a message. Vice Chair Cicero commented that the reality is that other teams will need to be self-funded in the future. Chair DeSack advised Ms. Clooney and Mr. Ventura to move forward with the survey, [after it is approved by the Superintendent]. The Committee still needs all legal documents, liability information, and a draft contractual agreement before it will agree. Ms. Clooney and Mr. Ventura will have to come before the Committee again for a final vote.

Policies – Review and Adoption - #8517-Cell Phones and Other Personal Electronic Devices—Permitted and Prohibited Possession and Use – 1st Reading – Members and Administrators exchanged concerns and opinions regarding Policy 8517. A discussion took place surrounding proposed language prohibiting the possession of a cell phone in a classroom during the school day and elementary school students not being permitted to bring cell phones to school. Director of Administration Robert Ross said that he would like to obtain a formal statement from First Student on their policy. In

response to Member Bollengier's inquiry, Clerk Coutcher said he has no problem with a student possessing a cell phone in school as long as it is off and it is not used in school; with the understanding that if a student gets caught using it, it will be taken away. Consensus of the committee is Policy #8517 should set the same guidelines for all grade levels and policy language shall establish that all phone(s) shall be off and secured in school. The policy subcommittee shall revisit this policy with the suggested revisions at its next meeting, after which the policy will come back to the School Committee meeting agenda for a 2nd Reading.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS – Policies – Review and Adoption -
#8700-School Health Program – 2nd Reading – Members did not
express any concerns or questions regarding
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policies 8700, 8702, 8703, 8704, 8707. Chair DeSack advised that tonight would be the appropriate time to express any comments, questions, suggestions, or concerns regarding these policies. All of these policies will come to the next regular meeting agenda for adoption.

**#8702-Managing Communicable and Infectious Diseases – 2nd
Reading –**

#8703-Immunization and Physical Examinations of Students – 2nd

Reading –

#8704-Managing Medical Emergencies – 2nd Reading –

#8706 – Managing Diabetes Among School Children – 2nd Reading –

#8707 – Managing Severe Allergies in the School Setting – 2nd Reading –

Discussion Regarding Breathalyzers at School Dances – Superintendent Geismar informed members that Attorney Gorham said that he will support whatever position the School Committee and Superintendent takes regarding administering breathalyzer testing at school dances. Dr. Geismar reported that he was contacted by the ACLU prior to the last school dance. That made him uncomfortable, therefore, he talked to Principal Boulé and advised her not to administer the testing. The ACLU has a problem with blanket breathalyzer testing of everyone but does not object to random testing or testing for cause. Dr. Geismar said that he felt he needed a better standpoint from the School Committee. He gave his opinion that he likes the idea of random and for cause testing when exiting the dance. He reported that one parent voiced concern to him regarding testing everyone. Director of Student Affairs Chris Anthony brought up the point that if the district goes with random testing, issues will arise relating to profiling. He recommended going with blanket testing. Principal Boulé compared blanketed breathalyzer testing to the bag searches that take place prior to the senior class trip. She pointed out that dances are not an educational right they are an opportunity and students can choose not to attend. The

testing will send a message to students that we care. Principal Boulé expressed her concern about parents who would be incredibly upset if they thought that their child was being singled out. She said that parent permission slips will still be incorporated which will negate that opportunity. Member Rafanelli voiced his opinion that if the school district has the opportunity to save one student's life, it has to do it. Members and Administrators discussed for cause and if testing should take place entering and/or exiting dances. Member Bollengier said that if you smell it or see it he has no problem with testing. Member Walsh said it is a legal issue that the ACLU brings up. She questioned if it is illegal to test all kids because if it is and one parent will sue the district then the district is in for a long haul. Dr. Geismar reported that Attorney Gorham said testing may be random or for everyone. If the Committee wants to hear Attorney Gorham's opinion Dr. Geismar said that he can contact him. Vice Chair Cicero said that she agrees with Member Rafanelli and she questioned what if something were to happen after a student left the dance. Member Walsh made the point that it can happen anyway. A student may have alcohol in the car. Mr. Anthony advised that a considerable amount of local districts have been testing everyone as long as they've been administering tests and no one has been sued. Principal Boulé said that if the Committee agrees to test it will

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be done on the way in and students will be told about the testing prior

to the prom. Mr. Anthony said that the idea is prevention not to catch someone.

Vice Chair Cicero made a motion to support breathalyzer testing by school administration at all the school dances. Seconded by Member Rafanelli.

Member Bollengier asked to clarify the motion.

Vice Chair Cicero said that she will add to her motion, “Every student be breathalyzed at every school dance at the discretion of administration as to when”. Seconded by Member Rafanelli. Voted 5 – 1 – 1 in favor. Member Bollengier voted no. Member Walsh abstained.

In response to Principal Boulé inquiry, Superintendent Geismar agreed to call Attorney Brad Gorham to get the answer to Member Walsh’s question and to call Ms. Boulé in the morning with Mr. Gorham’s answer. Chair DeSack asked Ms. Boulé to make sure Member Walsh’s question gets answered. Chair DeSack added that Member Walsh had abstained from the vote, and her vote will not change.

Capital Project Update – Superintendent Geismar advised that the Building Committee meets next week. Mr. Ross is in the process of getting bids for Phase II. Metcalf’s gym floor was redone over spring

break but the wood repair that was done does not match the existing floor. The contractor will be told to redo the repair once again and to get the color to match the rest of the floor. That repair will have to be done over the summer. Chair DeSack requested to include approved Building Committee meeting minutes in School Committee packets going forward.

REPORTS/COMMENTS –

IMPORTANT DATES AND MEETINGS – Tuesday, May 12, 2009-School Committee Meeting-(Wawaloam/Lineham Presentation @ Wawaloam School); Tuesday, May 26, 2009-School Committee Meeting-(Senior High School Presentation); Wednesday, June 10, 2009-School Committee Meeting-(Special Education Presentation); Friday, June 12, 2009-Graduation; Friday, June 19, 2009-Last Day of School; Tuesday, June 23, 2009-School Committee Meeting-(Facilities Presentation)

EXECUTIVE SESSION – RIGL 42-46-4 and RIGL 42-46-5 – Member →→→Vice Chair Cicero moved to go into Executive Session at 8:55 p.m. in accordance with 42-46-5 (a)(9) – CBA – Grievance(s), and 42-46-5 (2) – CBA – Negotiation Discussion, and 42-46-5 (2) CBA - Pending Litigation and 42-46-5 (a)(1) - Personnel. Seconded Member →→Zuercher. Voted 7 – 0 in favor.

Meeting recessed to Executive Session at 8:55 p.m.

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Vice Chair Cicero moved to reconvene to Open Session. Seconded by Member Walsh. Voted 7 – 0 in favor.

Meeting reconvened to Open Session at 9:30 p.m.

A vote not to authorize payment of a complainant's legal fees took place during Executive Session. Voted 7 – 0 in favor.

ROBIN CERIO

CLERK